

Interview preparation guide

How to use this guide

- Work through the six sections in order over several short sessions, or jump to the section you need before an interview.
- Use only real experience, describe your own role, and protect the confidentiality of patients and colleagues.
- Timeboxes are suggestions to keep practice focused. The exercises are practice formats, not program requirements.

1. Start with your evidence

Interview questions are easier to answer well when you can point to evidence: what you verified about the program and what you have actually done.

Program-fit worksheet

School or program	Interview date	Format (in person, video, phone)	Source checked and date

Two program features you verified	Why each one matters to you

One question the published information does not answer:

Your first 30 minutes (suggested)

Time	Step	Done
5 min	Choose one school and fill in the worksheet above from its published pages.	
10 min	Outline one real example you could use in an interview (see section 2).	
10 min	Say the example out loud, standing or sitting as you would in the interview.	
5 min	Write down one specific improvement to make next time.	

2. Build a story bank

A story bank is a short list of real events you know well enough to discuss from several angles. Use one real event per prompt, describe your own role, and leave out names, dates, and other identifying details.

Feedback and growth: a time you received direct feedback and changed how you work.

Evidence: what happened and your role	Your action	What you learned

Teamwork and disagreement: a time you disagreed with a colleague and how it was resolved.

Evidence: what happened and your role	Your action	What you learned

Uncertainty and escalation: a time you were unsure, said so, and asked for help or verification.

Evidence: what happened and your role	Your action	What you learned

Setback and resilience: a plan that did not work out and what you did next.

Evidence: what happened and your role	Your action	What you learned

A simple answer framework

Context, then **your action and reasoning**, then **outcome or feedback**, then **reflection**. Aim for roughly 60 to 90 seconds spoken. Keep the shape, not a memorized script; interviewers often follow up on one part.

Illustrative example (non-clinical process; not a story to adopt): a team notices that a recurring handoff note is often incomplete. One member drafts a short checklist, asks two colleagues to try it for a week, collects their comments, and revises it. Outcome: fewer follow-up questions. Reflection: inviting feedback before finalizing made the change easier to keep.

3. Rehearse motivation and judgment

Practice these three questions early. Prepare the substance first, then practice saying it plainly and out loud.

Why nurse anesthesia?

Lead with preparation evidence (what you have done, observed, or studied) rather than generic motivation. What specifically drew you in, and what have you done about it since?

Why this program?

Name a verified feature from the program's published information, explain the fit with how you learn or what you need, and end with one genuine question.

Tell us about a weakness.

Describe an observable pattern (not a disguised strength), the change you made, and feedback that shows the change is real.

Preparing for a clinical discussion (a process, not the answers)

This guide does not supply clinical facts. Prepare from your own practice and trusted sources:

- ☐ Pick a case you know well and can discuss without identifying anyone.
- ☐ Separate your own actions from the team's, and state the rationale you had at the time.
- ☐ Write down what you did not know then and what you would want to check now.
- ☐ Review those gaps against your coursework and current institutional protocols before the interview.

Saying "I am not certain" well

It is reasonable to say what you do not know. Practice one sentence that names the uncertainty and one that explains how you would verify it (a resource, a colleague, a protocol).

4. Run a useful mock interview

A mock interview is most useful when it is short, realistic, and followed by specific feedback. Ask a mentor, colleague, or friend to run this round with you.

Suggested 25-minute round

Minutes	Segment
2	Introduction: who you are and why you are applying, in your own words.
12	Questions: the interviewer chooses from the prompts below and follows up.
3	Your questions for the interviewer (see section 5).
5	Feedback using the debrief list below.
3	Repeat one answer with the feedback applied.

Question prompts for the interviewer

- What led you to nurse anesthesia, and what have you done to prepare?
- Tell me about feedback that changed how you practice.
- Describe a disagreement with a colleague and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a setback and what you did afterwards.
- Walk me through a clinical situation from your own experience and your reasoning at the time.
- Why this program, and what would you want to ask us?

Debrief (interviewer marks what was present)

- ☐ Used specific evidence rather than general statements.
- ☐ Made their own role clear and did not overstate it.
- ☐ Answered concisely and stopped when the point was made.
- ☐ Included a reflection or lesson, not only a description.
- ☐ Named uncertainty honestly and said how they would verify.

Your notes after the round

One thing to keep	One thing to change	One answer to repeat next time

5. Make a seven-session plan

Seven short sessions cover the ground; compress or stretch them to fit your timeline. Each session ends with a small deliverable you can show a mentor.

Session	Focus	Action	Deliverable	Date
1	School research	Complete the program-fit worksheet for each school.	Worksheet per school	
2	Story bank	Fill all four story prompts; say each aloud once.	Four outlined stories	
3	Motivation	Draft and rehearse the three answers in section 3.	Three spoken answers	
4	Clinical review	Prepare one case using the process in section 3.	Case notes and gaps	
5	Mock interview	Run the 25-minute round with a partner.	Debrief notes	
6	Targeted repeat	Re-record the two weakest answers; compare.	Revised answers	
7	Logistics	Confirm format, timing, documents, and setup.	Day-before checklist	

Day-before checklist

- ☐ Format, start time, and time zone confirmed from the program's own instructions.
- ☐ Location or video link tested; camera, microphone, and lighting checked in a quiet space.
- ☐ Requested documents ready; any program-specific instructions re-read.

Day of

Pause before answering. Listen to the whole question. Ask for clarification when you need it. Give honest answers, including honest uncertainty. Bring your questions.

Two questions for the faculty

Base them on the program's actual published information, for example how feedback is given, what support looks like during the program, or how clinical preparation is structured. Do not ask for unpublished test or interview content.

Question 1

Question 2

6. Connect your materials

The same evidence supports your personal statement and your application plan. Use these companion prompts alongside the interview work above.

Personal statement exercise

Prompt	Your notes
The event you will build on	
The motivation it connects to	
What it demonstrates about you	
Your next revision	

Application strategy

Requirement	Source	Status	Next action	Due

After practice

What became clearer?	What needs more work?	Focus for the next session

For mentors

- Ask follow-up questions rather than accepting the first version of an answer.
- Give observable feedback: what you heard, how long it took, where the evidence was thin.
- Do not supply a story or a wording for the applicant; help them find their own.

Scope. This is an independent preparation aid. It is not an admissions assessment, clinical guidance, or a statement of any program's requirements, and it does not guarantee any outcome. Each program's current published instructions take precedence over anything here. More at crnatutor.com.